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DOCKET FILE COPY: ORIGINAL

December 15, 2005

Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Ref.: Docket # 03-123

Dear Members of the Commission:

I am writing to express my strong support for the petition to mandate captioned telephone service for deaf and hard of hearing people, docket # 03-123, now in comment period before the FCC. I urge the Federal Communications Commission to mandate captioned telephone service for deaf and hard of hearing populations across the country in the manner advocated by the petition.

I write from first-hand knowledge of how hearing impairment can change one's life. After almost thirty years of service as a financial executive in higher education, I had to conclude that my steadily worsening hearing impairment would not allow me to continue my chosen work and I found myself "retired" well before my time.

A significant source of my difficulty in my work was that the time came when I could not use traditional phone service to carry on normal, ongoing business dealings. The time intensive and out-of-the-mainstream nature of the other relay services that exist today (voice carry over, TTY, sprint relay online) would not allow me access to using the telephone in ways that other parties will find useful. The business world is a fast-paced environment, as

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you know. Thus, the common access alternatives for deaf and hard of hearing people (voice carry over, TTY, sprint relay online) truly do not provide access to the quality and speed of telephone service enjoyed by the hearing population.

Beyond the economic effect on the deaf and hard of hearing populations of not having satisfactory access to telephone service, there is the personal side. Consider the common "give me a call and we'll talk it over" comments that pass among neighbors and friends day after day. Consider the situation for deaf and hard of hearing folks who cannot respond to that kind of invitation. Consider the experience of those who try to use the three inferior relay services cited above to try to make the most mundane of arrangements for everyday needs only to have the party on the other end hang up when they find it is a relay call because they do not want to be bothered by the slow and sometimes aggravating nature of the medium. Personally, I have had vendors for goods as diverse as firewood, electrical services, insurance, snow removal, and bathroom repairs hang up on me because they didn't have the time or interest to participate in a relay call.

I have tried captioned telephone service and it is by far the closest thing available now to the regular telephone service enjoyed by the hearing population. Several qualities differentiate captioned telephone from the other, inferior relay services: (1) the hearing impaired party can both hear the other side of the conversation (to the extent s/he is able) and read the text on the phone, (2) the conversation proceeds at much closer to real time than the other relay services, (3) the conversation is virtually seamless and transparent to the other party (a hugely important issue in business and to get around the rejection issue I have experienced in my personal life), (4) no typing is required and (5) no third party (relay operator) is a speaking participant in the calls.

I appreciate your taking time to consider my thoughts and to weigh the issues advanced in the petition filed by SHHH and other organizations. To repeat, I strongly support this petition and urge the FCC to mandate captioned telephone service for deaf and hard of hearing populations across the country in the manner advocated by the petition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'JH' followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line.